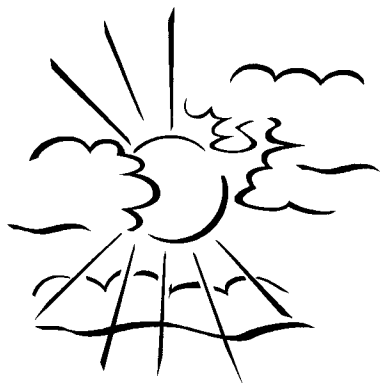


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*Important story at this spot

Articles in Today's Clips

Monday, July 3, 2006

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In memory of Ricky

Published July 2, 2006

From the Lansing State Journal

Death raises questions about child welfare system

By Tricia Bobeda
Lansing State Journal

One year ago today, Tim Holland called 911 to report his son Ricky missing.

In the nine-day ground search that followed, thousands of volunteers looked for a 7-year-old boy they thought had run away from his Williamston home, carrying his piggy bank and favorite action figures. The search ended with no sign of Ricky.

The community found some closure after his body was found seven months later and his adoptive parents, Tim and Lisa Holland, were charged with murder; they have accused each other in the boy's death.

Now the community wants answers: Is anyone to blame for the fate of a little boy found dead in a rural field?

After the Hollands were arrested, legislators and state officials vowed to investigate what more they could have done to prevent the Ricky Holland tragedy. Some changes have occurred:

- The Department of Human Services, which oversees the state's child welfare system, does more criminal background checks on foster parents and relatives. The Hollands became Ricky's foster parents in 2000 before they adopted him.
- Child Protective Services has hired more caseworkers.
- Computers are now centralized so caseworkers can communicate more effectively.

DHS Director Marianne Udow said the department's recent changes are part of an overhaul of the child welfare system that began before Ricky's death. The tragedy accelerated its efforts.

"We know the child welfare system has needed fundamental change," Udow said last week.

Charges of abuse

Court testimony in the Holland case revealed a school nurse reported bruises on Ricky, and caseworkers noticed injuries on his siblings after he disappeared. Tim Holland, 37, and Lisa, 33, also are charged with child abuse.

The number of confirmed abuse and neglect cases in Michigan has increased almost 20 percent, from about 15,000 cases in 2000 to more than 18,000 last year.

As of June 6, there were 789 Child Protective Services workers. Gov. Jennifer Granholm granted a mid-year appropriation for 51 more caseworkers earlier this year.

"It's critical that numbers be increased, not just with bodies, but with well-trained people," said Maxine Thome, executive director of the Michigan Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers.

State children's ombudsman Verlie Ruffin has completed a report on the state's involvement with Ricky, and DHS is looking at it now. When the criminal investigation is closed, Ruffin's report will go to the state Legislature for review.

Udow said results will be discussed publicly after the trial, scheduled to begin Sept. 11.

"If there is anything in our findings that says that we should have done things differently, we will certainly take action," she said. "We are accountable to the public."

A state House Special Committee on Child Protection also was appointed earlier this year to investigate Ricky's case file. The committee has been waiting for Ricky's DHS files since March.

Ingham County Prosecutor Stuart Dunnings III said the law requires Ricky's files remain

confidential while investigations are ongoing.

But state Rep. David Law, R-Commerce Township, is fighting to get Ricky's DHS file now. The House committee was denied the file after requesting it under a statute called Ariana's Law. That 2005 law expanded the powers of the children's ombudsman and legislators to investigate child abuse cases. The committee is weighing its options.

Ricky is a victim of a bureaucracy, said Pontiac resident Sonya Williams, who is organizing a candlelight vigil tonight in Williamston.

"There's no excuse for how he fell through the cracks," said Williams, who believes adoption procedures and child welfare laws need to be reformed.

Shared responsibility

Udow said child welfare is a shared responsibility. She wants to make sure people who suspect abuse and report it feel like they're being heard.

"The community has to tell us when they see things that are of concern," she said.

But state Rep. Rick Baxter, R-Concord, said DHS doesn't always listen. He is concerned that multiple calls about minor incidents may result in no reports filed. Thome said she hears similar complaints.

But Udow said every report, no matter how minor, is filed, even if it isn't substantiated. DHS also has a new One Family, One File computer system with the entire history of a family in a single file.

"We don't want paperwork or bureaucracy to get in the way of child safety," Udow said.

While the changes may help prevent children from falling through the cracks in the future,

Udow said those who were involved in Ricky's case are haunted by his death.

"Any of our social workers who were involved in this case (will have) nightmares for the rest

of their life," Udow said.

"They go into this wanting to improve the lives of children. It's something that's hard to live with."

Contact Tricia Bobeda at 377-1061 or tbobeda@lsj.com.

DISAPPOINTMENT AND APPRECIATION - Jeff Joy: People were vigilant

Several days into the search for Ricky Holland last year, a woman contacted Ingham County sheriff's dispatch, saying her husband had spotted the missing 7-year-old boy walking along a cornfield.

Detective Lt. Jeff Joy immediately called the woman back. What she said gave him hope.

"Just talking with her — the details she gave, the sound of her voice — made me think,

'This is it,'" recalled Joy, who retired in June after a 25-year career.

Officers from several departments, as well as a helicopter, responded to the area described by the woman.

But after several hours, there was no sign of Ricky.

"It was a disappointment we didn't find him," Joy said. "But we were glad people were out looking, that people were being vigilant."

Police worked 24 hours a day during the nine-day ground search for Ricky. Joy worked several 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. shifts, fielding reports of sightings from a command trailer set up at a farm near the Hollands' Williamston home.

"When we got a tip, we wanted to act on it right away," he said.

And there was no shortage of tips.

"We'd get people who swore they just saw Ricky walking along the road," he said. "We'd stop what we were doing and send people to check it out."

Seven months later, when Ricky's remains were found in a remote part of Ingham County,

Joy recalled thinking:

"All those people, all those hours, all the donations that came in — and this is how it's going to end up."

— Kevin Grasha

FEELINGS OF BETRAYAL - But Laura Maynard would help again

Laura Maynard, 62, walked three miles each morning from her apartment to the command center for eight straight days, then walked through fields looking for Ricky Holland.

She feels betrayed.

"Looking back, I gave the parents the benefit of the doubt. Some people thought it was odd that they were not more involved in the search," Maynard said. "I thought if he'd run away before, there would be a sense of bewilderment on their part, wondering what set the kid off this time."

Tim and Lisa Holland have been charged with murder in their son's death. They face a trial in the fall.

During those eight days, Maynard's search parties found a fruit snack wrapper and a footprint:

Both gave searchers the drive to keep looking, until they were ruled out as evidence.

But if a child went missing tomorrow, she would search again.

"If someone went missing I wouldn't hesitate, that hasn't changed for me," Maynard said.

She hopes Ricky's death can bring about positive change for other children.

"There were warning signs, and the school and the doctors didn't pay enough attention," she said. "Maybe another child won't slip through the cracks."

— Tricia Bobeda

ANGER AND RESENTMENT - Carol Wesolek: Search hard on neighbors

Carol Wesolek is angry about what she believes Tim and Lisa Holland put the community through.

“I can’t think of anything bad enough to do to those people,” said Wesolek, 75, who lives several houses from the Hollands’ home on Douglas Street in Williamston.

Wesolek said the search was hard on the neighborhood. Her home was searched twice, and her motor home was searched once.

“It’s a sad, sad thing,” she said.

Wesolek resents the time and money wasted on the search, but she said Ricky is still on everyone’s mind in the community. People have even started referring to the street she lives on as “Ricky Holland’s Road.”

— Tricia Bobeda and Kevin Grasha

Reader Comment

Reform will only come if We The People hold our elected officials feet to the fire and demand legislation with teeth in it to force the state to hire truly qualified workers to over see this system and hold them accountable for following the Policies and Procedures in the CPS and Foster Care Manuals.

When workers and Supervisors tell people and I have it on audio tape a supervisor from Midland County saying we can't follow P&P we don't have time. These are families not objects they are dealing with.

If Ricky had been left with his birth mother he would have lived in poverty more than likely but I would put my last dime on the fact he would be alive and happy today celebrating this holiday with his own family.

Number of Cases per 100,000 children in the United States. These numbers come from The National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect (NCCAN) in Washington.

Perpetrators of Maltreatment

Children Abused or Neglected in Foster Care 696 per 100,000
Children Abused by Parents 325 per 100,000

Child Deaths in the care of the State 6.4 Per 100,000
Child Deaths in the care of parents 1.5 Per 100,000

You decide where the children are better off.

Ricky holland case

Sun Jul 02,

I hope that the people in Williamston, and all across the State, never forget this child. If you do, there will never be change in the system. It takes citizens and hearts for a cause to change things.

How about Jessica Lundsford's father? Did he sit back and try to forget? He fought for change and he is getting it.

We need to put pressure on the government to make foster care and adoptions a safe and comfortable environment. Children should not live a life like Ricky did, they should be free and happy. It makes me sick how people want to forget, they should be outraged until change and reform is done.

I also want justice for Ricky, and if we keep his name in the public eye, it sure will help.

I have a question: I wonder why there has not been a memorial of any kind done for Ricky, with all the donations. I feel there should be a tree planted or a bench with a plaque in memory of him for all he went through that may bring about change and save some other child from suffering from such a life.

As the other writer stated, I too can't think of a hard enough punishment for the Hollands and what they did. Unforgiveable!

Good can come from bad?

On July 4th, 2005, my wife and I were two of hundreds of volunteers who helped search for Ricky Holland. We met the father, the siblings (cuties) and saw the house. We walked railroad tracks and fields. We left only when the weather became bad enough to call off all searches. Everyone searching for that glimmer of hope that this story wouldn't end up like so many others. Sadly it did.

But, we take to heart how many great volunteers were there to help. None of us could have possibly made a difference in Ricky's life on that day. But we did show that no matter how evil and terrible a small portion of the human race can be, the majority of it is full of good, kind and helpful people.

May Ricky rest in peace knowing that some good did come from the evil act he suffered.

A look back: Interview with Tim Holland as searchers look for Ricky

Lansing State Journal

Published July 2, 2006

The following audio is the voice of Tim Holland in an interview with the Lansing State Journal on July 4, 2005. Tim reported his 7-year-old adopted son Ricky missing on July 2. In the nine-day ground search that followed, thousands of police officers and volunteers searched an 18 mile radius surrounding the Holland's Williamston residence for a boy they thought was a runaway.

Ricky's remains were found six months ago in rural Ingham County. His parents, Tim and Lisa Holland, now accuse each other of killing Ricky. They are charged with murder and remain jailed.

The Hollands split up to grant interviews when the first wave of media outlets began reporting on the missing boy. Lisa talked to television reporters. The command center for the massive search operation was visible across the street. A uniformed victim's rights worker was always nearby, ready to step in if she felt the situation was too stressful for Ricky's parents.

Tim Holland talked to a Lansing State Journal reporter standing on the front lawn of his house while an ice cream truck played its familiar melody. The driver called out Ricky's name as she drove up and down the street. Police hoped the boy, who was reported missing Saturday morning and loved ice cream, might come out of hiding if he heard the truck.

During the interview, one of the Ricky's younger sisters pressed her face and hands against the window, peering out at the commotion. Police said when they entered the house during those days, the other children would rush to the door yelling Ricky's name. A judge has placed the children in state custody but ruled they could continue living with Tim's sisters.

Tim said the loss of a child is something no parent should have to go through. Many of the searchers brought their children with them to help find Ricky. One boy said “I know if I got lost or someone took me I’d want people to look for me.”

The Hollands said Ricky packed a blue backpack with change from his piggy bank, fruit snacks and toys. An identical backpack in red with Ricky’s little brother’s name written on it in black marker hung from the center post of the command tent so searcher knew what to look for.

Tim said he had been racking his brain wondering what he did wrong, why Ricky ran away. Six months later, he led police to the site of the Ricky’s body. Tim told police he drove Ricky’s remains in the back of a pickup to the wetland area in rural Ingham County where they were recovered.

Tim said he took the boy off his ADHD medication because it made him lose his appetite and he “didn’t want to see anything happen to him.” Grand Jury testimony later revealed the boy was often hungry, asking school officials and neighbors for food.

Thousands of community members volunteered to search through corn fields, woods and barns while National Guard helicopters scanned the air. Everything was treated as evidence – fruit snack wrappers, footprints and forgotten soccer balls.

Tim and Lisa visited the command tent occasionally during the search, but stayed in their home with Ricky’s siblings the rest of the time. Police said this was to make sure they were accessible in case Ricky called or was found.

At least 30 gather for candlelight vigil for Ricky

By Jen Marckini
Lansing State Journal

Published July 2, 2006

WILLIAMSTON - At least 30 people were gathered at McCormick Park by 8 p.m. this evening to participate in a candlelight vigil in memory of 7-year-old Ricky Holland.

Some went alone. Others with their children.

All were there to remember a little boy, the community's search and his tragic end.

"Every kid needs to be loved," said Kathy McAuliffe, 59 of, Williamston who was there with her husband, John, 63, and their grandchildren.

Ricky Holland was reported missing one year ago today sparking a massive search. His body was eventually found in late January and his parents, Tim and Lisa Holland were charged with open murder in connection with his death. A trial is set for September.

IN MEMORY OF RICKY HOLLAND

Monday, July 03, 2006

By Kameel Stanley
kstanley@citpat.com -- 768-4944

WILLIAMSTON -- Darlene Kirkbride never met Ricky Holland.

But that doesn't mean she didn't know him.

"It doesn't make any difference," she said. "To me, a child is a child."

Kirkbride, a Webberville resident, said she has saved every newspaper article about the 7-year-old and watches every television segment mentioning his name.

She and a small group of people came together Sunday evening at McCormick Park in Williamston for a candlelight vigil to mark the one-year anniversary of his death.

A year ago, Ricky's parents, Tim and Lisa Holland of Williamston, reported him missing. After police had searched for Ricky for months, Tim Holland led them in January to his adopted son's body in a wooded area near Dansville.

The couple is charged with murder and will be tried Sept. 11.

The family lived in Jackson before moving to Williamston.

"I'd like to know what happened," Kirkbride said. "I would not go on the jury. I've already got them convicted."

Bobbie Titus, 68, of Fenton organized the ceremony, which included a poem reading, hymns and testimonies from community members who helped search for Ricky.

The group clutched small, white candles and protected the flames from wind with their hands as a local minister said a prayer for Ricky.

"The citizens of Williamston should not be forgotten and should be an example for other communities for what you did for Ricky," Titus said to the group.

Titus, a retired administrative assistant for the Michigan Department of Human Services, is a member of Rally for Ricky, an organization that advocates safety for adopted and foster children by urging the state to reform laws and policies.

"He not only touched the hearts here, he touched hearts across the country," she said.

Amanda and Tim Blumer of Williamston never met Ricky either, but said they felt connected to him because they helped search for the little boy.

"It was hot, and it was devastating that we didn't find him," Amanda Blumer said.

Laura Maynard of Williamston got involved with the search for a different reason.

Her niece and nephew ran away once, while the family was in Detroit.

"I know how it feels," she said.

Maynard, who is 62 and retired, walked at least six miles to and from the command station for eight days to search for Ricky.

Maynard said she hoped this case will bring about reform and positive change.

"Hopefully, not another child will fall through the cracks," she said.

Bill and Beth Benson of Williamston have been following the case as well, and said they felt it was important to be at the vigil.

Bill Benson used to drive by the search site on his way to work and said there would be hundreds of volunteers looking for Ricky.

It was amazing, he said, and was a testament to how small towns can come together for a cause.

"We just wanted to be a part of this," Beth Benson said. "Ricky was 7. I used to teach second grade. I used to hang out with 7-year-olds all the time."

Rally for Ricky will host a balloon release at 8:30 a.m., Sept. 11 in front of Lansing City Hall, 124 W. Michigan Ave. Red, white, blue and black balloons will be released to signify the Fourth of July weekend search for Ricky and the birthdays that have passed since his reported disappearance.

For more information, visit facesofthemissing.org/rickyhollandboard/index.php.

State to release report in 7-year-old's death after trial

Case accelerates changes to child welfare system

JULY 3, 2006

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WILLIAMSTON -- A state report on the performance of child welfare workers and other authorities is expected to be released once the courts decide whether 7-year-old Ricky Holland's adoptive parents are guilty of murdering him.

Tim and Lisa Holland of Williamston have accused each other in the boy's death. His remains were found in January. Their trial is set to begin Sept. 11 in Ingham County Circuit Court in Mason.

After the Hollands were arrested, lawmakers and state officials promised to find what could have been done to act earlier on suspected mistreatment of Ricky.

State children's ombudsman Verlie Ruffin has finished a report on the state's involvement with Ricky, and the Department of Human Services is reviewing it. The report is scheduled to go to the state Legislature after the criminal case ends.

Since the arrest of the Hollands, the state Department of Human Services has increased criminal background checks on foster parents and relatives. The Hollands became Ricky's foster parents in 2000 and adopted him later.

More caseworkers were hired for Child Protective Services. And the state has centralized computers so caseworkers can communicate better.

Human Services Director Marianne Udow said Ricky's death sped up an overhaul of the child welfare system.

"We know the child welfare system has needed fundamental change," Udow was quoted as saying in the Lansing State Journal last week.

Social workers who were involved in this case will have "nightmares for the rest of their life," Udow said.

Michigan had about 18,000 confirmed abuse and neglect cases in 2005. On June 6, there were 789 Child Protective Services workers. Gov. Jennifer Granholm approved funding for 51 more earlier this year.

A state House special committee was named this year to investigate Ricky's death, but Ingham County Prosecutor Stuart Dunning III said state law requires that the files be withheld from the committee during the investigation.

"If there is anything in our findings that says that we should have done things differently, we will certainly take action," Udow said.

Federal dollars target local child neglect problem

Stuart Frohm, Midland Daily News

06/30/2006

The U.S. House Thursday approved a potential \$335,000 federally funded pilot program to cut parental neglect of Midland County children.

The Senate hasn't yet acted on the proposal, aimed at people appearing in family court, said an aide to Midland Republican Rep. Dave Camp.

Midland County Probate Court Judge Dorene Allen, who would oversee the program, praised Camp for getting the proposal through the House.

Here's the idea, according to Allen:

Teach counselors how to deal with parents. And teach parents how to interact with and bond with their children up to age 3 -- such basics as how to hold and feed the children, make eye contact and respond to their cues.

Child neglect and lack of parenting skills sometimes extend back two generations or more, Allen said.

The need is evident. In the last 18 months, dozens of children -- half of the children in Midland County child protection cases -- are age 3 or younger, she said.

Allen called them "the most vulnerable children in our child protection cases. They are babies who are not yet able to talk or even walk."

The federal grant, if received, would be for a year. To continue the program, more money from federal, state or local sources would be needed, Allen said.

The Zero to Three Program is based on work in the Miami-Dade (Florida) Juvenile Court.

Three years of data show that for families completing treatment, developmental functioning of 58 percent of the children improved, there were no new substantiated reports of abuse or neglect, and all the infants were reunited with their families, Camp's office said in a prepared statement.

Allen said Michigan Supreme Court Justice Maura Corrigan suggested the idea of Midland County being the first in Michigan -- and about fourth in the United States -- to try the program.

Corrigan called her after hearing about the program, Allen said.

The House approved the program for Midland County as part of the Science, State, Justice, Commerce, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for the 2007 fiscal year, Camp's office reported. It would be funded under the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs.

"I've worked closely with Justice Corrigan on a number of laws to improve the safety and health of children in the welfare and foster care systems, and this is just one more step to ensure every child is raised in a loving and supportive environment," Camp said in a prepared statement. "I really want to commend Judge Allen and Justice Corrigan for bringing this project to Midland and to Michigan. We need to be doing everything possible to support the best interests of these children and get their families back on the right track."

Midland Daily News 2006

State push: Don't leave kids in cars

Drivers would face charges even if no harm is done

July 3, 2006

BY FRANK WITSIL

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Adults who leave children alone in cars could soon face misdemeanor or felony charges under a proposal making its way through the state Legislature.

The package of two bills, which already passed the House, is under review in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

"I hate to make laws to do this," said Rep. Fran Amos, R-Waterford, who is sponsoring one of the bills. "But I felt there were too many incidents where people really didn't have enough sense. If you leave a kid in a car in 90-degree heat, they will die. We've got to do something."

Child safety groups support the legislation, but they also are lobbying for federal legislation requiring automakers to put in devices that remind drivers when a child is in the backseat. The devices would be similar to those that warn when a seat belt is unfastened.

Janette Fennell, founder and president of Leawood, Kan.-based Kids and Cars, said that although much attention is focused on children who die in hot cars as a result of neglect, in most cases the deaths are accidental and the drivers simply forgot about the kids.

Nationwide, eight children have died this year because they were left in hot cars, Fennell said last week. None of the deaths was in Michigan.

Amos said that the proposed law in Michigan, which sets up graduated penalties for people who leave children 6 and younger in vehicles, is necessary to help police prevent deaths and injuries. Amos said she hoped the law would deter adults from intentionally leaving children in cars.

Under the proposal, it would be a misdemeanor to leave a child in a vehicle for a period of time that could be harmful -- whether the child was harmed or not. A driver could be charged with a felony if the child were seriously injured or died.

Rep. David Law, R-Commerce Township, a former Oakland County assistant prosecutor who is also sponsoring the bill package, said the proposal gives police and prosecutors more authority.

Last July, Southfield police were frustrated when they could not get Oakland County prosecutors to charge a 27-year-old Detroit woman who detectives said left her two daughters -- ages 2 and 3 -- in a black Chevrolet Cavalier parked at Northland Center for more than two hours.

At the time, prosecutors said that because the children were not harmed, it would have been difficult to prosecute the mother.

Some communities have ordinances that make it a crime to leave a child in a car, and prosecutors can charge adults with contributing to the neglect of a minor -- a misdemeanor -- for leaving a child in a car even if the boy or girl is unharmed.

That's what happened May 7 in Southfield.

Police said Erica Lancaster left her daughter, who was not quite 5 months old, in a 1997 Ford Explorer with the windows open only a few inches in the parking lot of a Meijer on Telegraph Road. The 23-year-old Detroit woman was arrested and charged with

contributing to the neglect of a minor. She pleaded no contest, and her sentencing is set for July 13.

One of the most notorious metro Detroit cases was in 2002, when Tarajee Maynor of Detroit left her 3-year-old son and 10-month-old daughter in a sweltering Dodge Neon for hours while she tried on clothes, got a massage and had her hair done in Southfield. Both children died.

Maynor was charged with first-degree murder; she pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and is serving a minimum of 12 1/2 years in prison.

Terrill Struttman, founder and executive director of Kids in Cars, a nonprofit group in Washington, Mo., said he does not know of any group that opposes legislation making it illegal to leave children alone in vehicles. But he said sometimes people oppose legislation that tells them how to behave as parents.

Carmen Parnell, 22, of West Bloomfield said she supports the Michigan proposal.

"It's dangerous to leave kids by themselves," Parnell said Friday at the Southfield Public Library, which she visited with her 20-month-old daughter. "They shouldn't be unattended at all -- ever."

Contact FRANK WITSIL at 248-351-3690 or witsil@freepress.com.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

- Michigan's proposed law establishes graduated penalties for an adult who leaves a child 6 or younger in a vehicle without supervision by someone 13 or older for a period of time or under circumstances that pose "an unreasonable risk or harm" to the child. The law would not apply if an adult exits a car to pump gas.

- If the child is unharmed, the penalty is a misdemeanor, punishable by up to 93 days in jail and a \$500 fine.

- If the child is harmed, the penalty is a misdemeanor, punishable by up to 1 year in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

- If the child is seriously injured, the penalty is a felony, punishable by up to 10 years in prison and a \$5,000 fine.

- If the child is killed, the penalty is a felony, punishable by up to 15 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine.

States with similar laws: California, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Nebraska, Nevada, Pennsylvania, Texas, Washington.

States with pending legislation: Iowa, Kansas, Massachusetts, Oklahoma, Tennessee.

Source: Michigan Rep. Fran Amos

SAFETY TIPS

- How to make sure you don't leave a child in a vehicle:
- Put something you will need, such as your cell phone, handbag, lunch or briefcase, on the floor of the backseat. Get in the habit of opening the back door every time you reach your destination to be sure no child is there.
- Keep a teddy bear in the child's car seat when it is not occupied. When you put the child in the car seat, put the teddy bear in the front passenger seat as a reminder that when the bear is in front, the child is in back.
- Arrange with the day-care provider or babysitter that you will call if your child will not be there on a scheduled day. Ask the babysitter to phone you if your child does not show up when expected.
- If you see a child alone in a vehicle, get involved. Call 911. If the child seems hot or sick, get him or her out as soon as possible.

Source: Kids and Cars

Day-care worker pleads guilty to reduced charge

Saturday, July 01, 2006

By John Tunison
The Grand Rapids Press

ALLEGAN -- Jason Kortman started out by simply rubbing the 6-year-old girl's upset stomach.

But the former Holland day care worker admitted Friday he went too far when his hand slipped inside her pants.

"I did touch over her privates," he said while pleading guilty in Allegan County Circuit Court to a reduced charge. "Then I pulled my hand away and told her I was sorry and that it should not have happened."

When Judge George Corsiglia asked whether he touched the girl for a sexual reason, Kortman replied yes.

Kortman, 22, of Holland, was working last summer at Lakeshore Little People's Place, housed at South Side Christian School, 913 Pine Ave., when police allege he molested the girl. Originally charged with second-degree criminal sexual conduct, he pleaded guilty to assault with intent to commit sexual penetration.

He faces up to 10 years in prison when sentenced Aug. 4.

Lakeshore Little People's Place put Kortman on leave after the allegations surfaced in August and fired him upon his arrest. He had no prior criminal record.

The victim's family declined to comment.

In a written statement, Kortman's family said they support him and described him as a "caring, loving young man."

"We have learned that we have a tremendous group of family and friends who have supported us through this whole process and continue to be by our side," the statement said. The family also voiced concerns about the legal system but gave no details.

"At some point, we will find a way to share these insights with others so that they may avoid being caught in this system and all of its flaws," the statement said.

During a probable cause hearing in January, the girl testified that "Mr. Jason" touched her as she sat on his lap in a classroom with about 10 other children, but no adults. The other children were watching a movie in the room.

Ward back in prison for parole violations

STACY LANGLEY, The Huron Daily Tribune

07/03/2006

BAD AXE — The parolee who was arrested at a Bad Axe hotel nearly a year ago and charged with accosting a child for immoral purposes and seven additional misdemeanor charges, including indecent exposure and furnishing alcohol to minors, is back in prison to serve at least 18 more months for violating his parole.

Michael Charles Ward was arrested by Bad Axe Police officers July 15 at the Holiday Inn Express in the city after police responded to a call reporting minors at the hotel were drinking alcohol.

Parents of the teens reported the incident to police after they arrived at the hotel to pick up the teens and heard they were possibly drinking alcohol at the hotel. According to police reports, the parents entered the hotel room and found Ward inside the bedroom naked, watching a pornographic video with the teens in the hotel room nearby.

Ward was arraigned a short time after his arrest on a felony charge of accosting a child for immoral purposes, and misdemeanor charges that included three counts of indecent exposure, three counts of selling/furnishing alcohol to a minor and one count of malicious destruction of (hotel) property.

But while charges against Ward lingered, he sat lodged in the Huron County Jail for eight months until Huron County prosecutors decided to dismiss the charges against him, letting officials from the Michigan Department of Corrections handle the matter by way of a parole hearing on multiple alleged parole violations stemming from the incident with the teens at the hotel.

Huron County Prosecutor Mark J. Gaertner said “there’s no doubt that Ward is right back where he belongs — in prison.”

The Department of Corrections sentenced Ward to 18 months in prison for violating his parole.

Gaertner said the delay that left Ward in jail for eight months came when Ward’s attorney David B. Herrington asked the district court for an adjournment for the preliminary examination due to information his client had concerning an unrelated case involving Stephen Cline. Herrington said Ward wanted to relay information to the Huron County Prosecutor’s Office.

Gaertner said in no way was there any agreement to dismiss the charges against Ward in return for testimony against Stephen Cline (who at the time was on trial for repeatedly suffocating his blind/diabetic wife). In return for testimony, an agreement was signed by

Ward, Herrington and Gaertner on Dec. 19, which indicates Gaertner agreed only to inform the Department of Corrections and Michigan Attorney General of “Ward’s willingness to come forward and testify” in the case against Stephen Cline. The official document obtained by the Tribune states the terms of the agreement set by both sides and does not indicate any other terms or conditions other than Gaertner will operate in “good faith and give consideration on Ward’s pending charges after the trial of Stephen Cline.”

“Ward provided testimony that was important not only at trial, but the time of sentencing for Stephen Cline. While the two were cell mates in the Huron County Jail, Cline told Ward details about the crime — and what was especially pivotal was the date of April 14 — that was the date that Pigeon Police Officer Colleen Emerick stumbled (onto) Cline’s activities,” Gaertner said. “He filled in gaps in the case. Ward also was able to testify about Cline’s expressed intentions with his wife, that Stephen Cline was going to take his behavior to the next level — kill his wife and have sex with her.

“Was all of this helpful in obtaining the conviction? Probably. Was it helpful in obtaining the sentence? Absolutely.”

The recommended sentence for Cline was 18 to 30 years in prison, but the judge sentenced him to 25 to 40 years.

“My opinion is Ward’s testimony was essential in gaining extra years behind bars for Stephen Cline. A judge can not sentence upward or outside the guidelines unless he’s considering things on the record. Ward’s testimony was compelling,” Gaertner said. “Keep in mind, the minute Ward testified he labeled himself as a snitch, and it’s not going to be pleasant in prison with a label like that. I had to ask myself the question, ‘Who’s more dangerous — Stephen Cline or Michael Ward?’ To me it was a no-brainer. If Cline were out on the street now or even on the street a number of years from now, I surely feel he’ll do this again.”

In holding up his end of the agreement with Ward, Gaertner did attend the hearing at Jackson Prison in early June with the administration from the Department of Corrections. At that time he informed the Department of Corrections of Ward’s cooperation with police in regards to statements made by Stephen Cline to Ward while both men were lodged in the Huron County Jail.

“My testimony could be characterized as not being entirely beneficial to Mr. Ward, but I am duty bound to inform them (the Department of Corrections) of what he did during the Cline trial as I am duty bound to inform them of what Ward’s conduct was after he was released on Nov. 11, 2004 from prison,” Gaertner said. “Ward has served more time in jail and now in prison than he would have ever ended up serving if he were convicted of any one of the offenses at the hotel, assuming we could have gotten a conviction.”

Gaertner said there were plenty of problems with the case against Ward (at the hotel in July), one of which was credibility problems with juveniles who would have been called to testify at a trial. That was one of the reasons the case was dismissed.

“Their credibility would have been attacked on the witness stand. Questions about what were they doing there, and where were their parents. We look at the case very close and at all angles of the case. At one point we considered charging the parents for contributing to delinquency of a minor for allowing children in a motel with a guy on parole from prison,” Gaertner said. “But mainly this all came down to credibility of the juveniles who have had prior contact with the juvenile court system and concern we wouldn’t get a conviction on Ward and we’d lose testimony valuable in the Cline case.”

According to Probation/Parole Officer Todd Kloska, as soon as charges against Ward were dropped in late March the Department of Corrections made their way to the Huron County Jail, picked up Ward and returned him to prison.

Ward was scheduled for a hearing to take place on June 9 at Jackson Prison, at which time Kloska and Bad Axe Police Officer Shawn Webber were expected to testify from a location in Flint about Ward’s conduct at the hotel while on parole.

Kloska said what he understands happened is that Ward and his attorney went back and forth with the Department of Corrections until both sides were able to work out some sort of plea agreement in which Ward agreed to plead “no contest” to just three of the parole violations he was facing for exposing himself in front of minors at the hotel in Bad Axe. In the agreement with the Department of Corrections the other five violations were dismissed.

Ward was on parole for a 1981 conviction for possession with intent to deliver more than 650 grams of cocaine in Washtenaw County. He was sentenced to life in prison but was paroled in November of 2004 and given four years to spend on parole. Now Kloska and Gaertner agree there’s no telling when Ward will be released from prison.

“He’ll have to go before the parole board when his 18 months are up, certainly they will scrutinize this case a little more because of the problems he had when he was out. They could hang on to him for the rest of his life,” Kloska said.

Effects of school lists vary

One area employee lost job as result of criminal record investigation

Saturday, July 01, 2006

BY MARJORIE KAUTH-KARJALA AND DAVID JESSE
News Staff Reporters

John H. Roberts says he paid his debt nearly 30 years ago when he served prison time for his role in the rape of a woman. Since then, the Superior Township man says, he has stayed clean and become a respected member of the community.

Now Roberts says he is being punished all over again after he was forced to resign his job in the Ypsilanti school district earlier this year when his criminal past was revealed as part of a statewide check into the criminal records of all public school employees.

With the support of school officials, Roberts is trying to get his job back.

Roberts is one of 14 employees in five area school districts whose names were among those with criminal backgrounds reported by the Michigan Department of Education in a statewide listing. The convictions range from passing a bad check to criminal sexual conduct in Roberts' case.

Roberts is the only area school employee who lost his job as a result of the check. In most of the other area cases, district school boards have voted to retain the employees.

The list, released to the public Thursday after newspapers filed Freedom of Information requests, was first compiled by the Michigan Department of Education early this year after a new law went into effect requiring all school and day care employees to undergo criminal background checks. The original list contained errors and was re-released in May, but not publicly released until Thursday. It now contains 470 names.

By state law, any employees convicted of certain sexual offenses must be dismissed, but school districts have discretion with other convictions.

In the Ann Arbor district, eight employees have felony records, including drunk driving, possession of a controlled substance and welfare fraud. None of the charges required immediate dismissal by the district. The district has retained six of the eight and the other two cases are pending.

Roberts left his job in the Ypsilanti district in February after the background check list was initially released. He was convicted in 1977 of first-degree criminal sexual conduct for aiding and abetting the rape of a woman who was picked up on I-94 in Pittsfield

Township by Roberts and four other men. Roberts was sentenced to 2 1/2-20 years in prison. He was released in 1978.

Roberts, who worked in the Ypsilanti district for 27 years as a bus driver, custodian and warehouse worker, said he is speaking out on the issue because he believes he was punished for his crime and shouldn't be further penalized 30 years later.

"I did my time," he said.

Roberts, who lives in Superior Township with his wife, Pamela, and their five children, has the support of district Superintendent James Hawkins.

"I would hire him back tomorrow if I had the opportunity," Hawkins said. "...He made a mistake as a 19-year-old man, which he paid for."

Roberts's personnel file, obtained by The Ann Arbor News, contains numerous letters from staff members and parents praising his conscientious work ethic.

Roberts applied for a job in the district in 1979 and said he disclosed that he had been arrested. Roberts said the personnel director contacted his parole officer before approving the hiring.

However, there is no record of the parole officer contact in the file, said John Fulton, the district's current personnel director, who nonetheless agrees that Roberts was an excellent employee.

Roberts believes that because he disclosed his record when he was hired and because of his excellent work record since then, the district should be able to exercise discretion by retaining him.

Roberts said he is looking for another job and pursuing a pardon from Gov. Jennifer Granholm. He said his wife does not have a job and he hasn't been able to qualify for unemployment payments.

Ypsilanti had two other employees with felony convictions that included heroin possession, controlled substance possession and retail fraud. The board approved retaining the employees.

The Ann Arbor school district is still looking into two of the eight employees on the felony list after retaining the other six. The other six had offenses that all occurred after they had been hired by the district. None of the employees listed was a teacher. Offenses were two cases of welfare fraud, two cases of controlled substance possession, two for larceny, two drunken driving offenses against one employee and one uttering and publishing offense.

Natasha Smith, a paraprofessional at Pioneer High School who has a conviction for an attempted possession of a controlled substance, said she disputes the validity of the conviction and is seeking an expungement of her record.

School board member Randy Friedman voted against continuing to employ the six.

He said he considered the safety of students and the need for employees to be role models vs. giving people a second chance.

"If all is equal, you have to protect the kids," he said.

School board member Irene Patalan took a different tack in voting to continue to employ the six.

"I do believe in rehabilitation," she said. "I do believe people make mistakes."

Three other districts in The Ann Arbor News coverage area - Brighton, Fowlerville and Lincoln - had employees with offenses including stalking, receiving and concealing stolen property, and forgery. The district boards voted to retain the employees.

In Brighton, Assistant Superintendent Don Thomas said a custodian was found to have passed a bad check 33 years ago. Thomas said he thought the board acted appropriately because of how long ago the incident occurred and that the custodian was 17 at the time.

In Fowlerville, custodian Steven DeMarais, 52, who was convicted of receiving and concealing stolen property in 1975, said he's worked diligently in the Fowlerville district for 22 years.

"I'm not the same person I was back then. ...People made restitution and served probation. People make mistakes." DeMarais, "I'm very fortunate that people stood behind me here (in agreeing to retain him)."

In the Lincoln school district, Csaba Kovacs, a teacher for 30 years in the district, was convicted of stalking. The board voted to retain the teacher because of the circumstances surrounding the case, said Superintendent Fred Williams. Williams said Kovacs was going through a divorce and the incident did not recur. Kovacs said he pleaded no contest to the charge to avoid a costly trial and added, "I have nothing to be ashamed of other than being stupid." Kovacs said it was unfortunate that his employment was jeopardized by an incident that had nothing to do with teaching.

Attempts to reach other area school employees on the state list Friday were unsuccessful.

Marjorie Kauth-Karjala can be reached at mkarjala@annarbornews.com or at 734-482-2961.

I want this nightmare to be over

Sun Jul 02, 2006

Sisters on the run from foster care system share thoughts in letter

Natasha Sawyers said she and Ashley fear what will happen to them if they surrender to the same child welfare system they've been hiding from.

Sunday, June 25, 2006

By Ron Fonger

Natasha Sawyers' letter

GENESEE COUNTY

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Sunday, June 25, 2006

JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Dear Flint Journal Editor: A story was written on Sunday, June 4, 2006 about a girl who had been in foster care and now a porn star.

In that story myself and my sister were featured as runaways. I would like to provide you with some information. We ran away for a reason - we are not "bad" kids. ... following is our story.

My younger sister and I were introduced to the system in 2003. ... In this (foster home) situation I felt like I was the target, that everything that would go on in the house would fall back on me. I remember nights when my younger sister would stay up crying, asking me a question like, "What did she do wrong?" and "Why is God doing this to her, and to us?"

I then found myself playing a huge role in her life. Basically, from that night on I became her mother.

After months and months of feeling like nothing, the only one I felt was here for me was my younger sister. I got up and decided to leave. It may not have been a good decision but at that time I was right.

About a year later I found myself in the streets switching houses, putting up with people who really didn't care for me, just weren't right, only because I felt I had nowhere else to go. At times I wanted to turn myself in and other times I just wanted it all to end.

I was told if I turn myself in I would have to go to a "boot camp" or a girl's home. I have not committed any crime and I did not want to be in a place with people who did who could harm me. I did not understand why I was going to be punished - my sister and I had suffered enough. Instead of taking the wrong road, I just stayed strong for me and my sister.

Months went by and I hadn't seen my sister and I was missing her. Some days she would call my phone just to speak with me. After (she complained of mistreatment) I told her to pack her

things because I felt she should not have had to go through that because she had not done anything wrong. Yeah, siblings get into it a lot but my sister was looking out for me and I had to look out for her. ...

Ever since then we have been on the run switching homes. It is 2006 and I'm getting sick of this. Why won't they place us somewhere where we are safe, comfortable, and loved? I would go back to school, my sister wants to be in school. We want to be happy. I want to be a R.N. when I grow up. We are sick of running.

A lady I was staying with who was trying to help us told us that a child's life should be happy. That's what we deserve. Me and my sister are still together and together. ...

(My case worker) treats us as if we have committed a terrible crime. But, the only crime we have committed was being a kid. I want this nightmare to be over. I have prayed for help and I believe the newspaper article was a blessing from God. I don't want to go to a reform school or boot camp I want to go to Job Corps and finish school and get a great job. I want my sister safe with someone who will love and protect her.

For once, listen to what we have to say. We have been taken from a mother we love and our father is not alive. We don't want the same life as the girl who became a porn star, I want to live a good, normal life and help people.

Thank you for listening. If you want you can print and copy.

Natasha Sawyers

Judge to sisters: Come back Runaways from foster care promised good home, return to school

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION
Sunday, July 02, 2006

By Ron Fonger
rfonger@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6317

FLINT - If two runaway foster children want a safe home and a chance to return to school, Genesee County Family Court Judge Duncan M. Beagle promises - in writing - to make it happen.

In an open letter to Natasha Sawyers, 16, and Ashley Sawyers, 14, Beagle writes that the sisters who fled from foster homes months ago won't be punished for running away. He urges them to let others help get their lives on track. The letter appears in full on page XX.

"There are people who want to help you, people who have volunteered to take you and your sister into their homes," it says. "We will work with you to find a place where you can live the good, normal life you want for yourself and your sister."

The letter responds to one from Natasha Sawyers to The Flint Journal. In her letter, parts of which were published last Sunday, Natasha explains why she and her sister ran away from foster homes. They are two of 15 children from the county who currently are missing from the state's foster care system.

Beagle, who removed the girls from their mother's custody in 2004, said he hopes they see his letter. The girls' father is deceased.

"They connected with you. Somebody ... is reading your paper," Beagle said of his reason for writing the open letter -an unusually personal step.

Like Beagle, Martha Yates, a disabled 65-year-old Burton resident, was moved when she read Natasha's account of life on the street and her desire to stop running and return to school.

QUICK TAKE

"You deserve to finish school, to live with people who will care for you, to enjoy life and pursue your dreams. That's why I'm appealing to you and Ashley: Please, for your own sakes, stop running. Come in from the streets."

- Genesee County Family Court Judge Duncan M. Beagle in an open letter to foster care runaways Natasha and Ashley Sawyers
Read the entire letter on page A2.

Although the girls have committed no crime, police are authorized to pick them up if they are found because they are missing from their court-ordered placements without permission.

Yates lives on a fixed income but offered to contribute money to help the sisters start anew.

"I would put up the first \$50 to help," she said. "At least it would put them each in a new pair of shoes."

The Journal first wrote about the sisters and the plight of other foster care runaways in a June 4 story that detailed the life of a Flint foster child who moved to Florida and became an adult film star in the same year the state Department of Human Services was responsible for her care.

Journal readers called in tips after that story, and four of the county's 19 runaways have been found.

Finding the children is critical because they are susceptible to predators and can be desperate for a place to stay.

"Girls get taken advantage of more," said county Casework Supervisor Remus Holbrook. "That's one of the biggest issues we are confronted with when they run."

Holbrook said the state has a duty to keep looking for children who run away after they are placed in foster care.

"The state has to act as if it were the parent until these kids are adopted out or another placement is in order," he said.

Children are placed in foster care not because they did anything wrong but because their parent or guardian abused or neglected them.

Beagle removed the Sawyerses from their mother, Lori L. Manuel, after the state petitioned family court in late 2004 because of Manuel's "chronic incidents of neglect and the risk of (Manuel's) repeated disappearances."

Natasha was reported missing from foster care in November. Her sister ran away from foster care in January.

In her letter, Natasha claims she and her sister were mistreated in foster care,an allegation the state Department of Human Services has agreed to investigate.

An open letter to Natasha Sawyers

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Sunday, July 02, 2006

JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

June 30, 2006

Dear Ms. Sawyers,

In your recent letter to The Flint Journal about your life as a runaway from foster care, you wrote, "For once, listen to what we have to say." I want you to know that the Genesee County Family Division judges, referees and many others are listening. I am also hoping that you see this letter as I know of no other way to reach you and others like you who are on the run.

You are right - you and your sister, Ashley, deserve to be safe. You deserve to finish school, to live with people who will care for you, to enjoy life and pursue your dreams. That's why I'm appealing to you and Ashley: Please, for your own sakes, stop running. Come in from the streets.

You have both suffered a great deal. Perhaps that is why life on the streets, as bad as it is, seems like an option. However, I don't have to tell you that living on the streets is not a "good, normal life." You know that - you called it a "nightmare." And you're right, Ms. Sawyers. It's no life for you and sister. It's no life for anyone.

We can do better for you. That's why I hope that you will read this letter - and that you and your sister will come in from the streets. That is why I have asked your lawyer to please tell you if you call her, and why

I am telling you now: You and your sister will not be punished for turning yourselves in. You will not be sent to "boot camp" or reform school. There are people who want to help you, people who have volunteered to take you and your sister into their homes. We will work with you to find a place where you can live the "good, normal life" you want for yourself and your sister.

You can call your attorney, Theresa Holifield, collect at (810) 908-0537. You can call the court staff collect at (810) 257-3540 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. and ask for Juvenile Casework Supervisors Remus Holbrook and Patrice Steihl. If you prefer, come to the Genesee County Courthouse at 900 S. Saginaw St. in downtown Flint anytime between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. and check in with my staff.

We're listening, Ms. Sawyers. We hope to hear from you.

Sincerely,

Duncan M. Beagle,

Circuit Judge

HARRISVILLE

Boy faces detention after killing his dad

A 13-year-old boy who admitted to shooting and killing his father could be held in a detention facility until he is 21 after pleading guilty to voluntary manslaughter.

The boy, from southwestern Alcona County, was 12 at the time of the shooting and is charged as a juvenile. He entered the plea Wednesday and is scheduled for sentencing July 27.

The maximum possible penalty is being detained until he turns 21.

The boy told the court that he shot his 46-year-old father, Mark A. Link, on Jan. 31 after they argued.

DFP 7/2

Fighting truancy

Judge's call for faster action on absent students has merit

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION
Monday, July 03, 2006

When children repeatedly miss school, not only do they lag behind in their studies and become an added challenge for teachers, their absences are often a sign that all is not well at home.

With that in mind, Duncan Beagle, a Genesee Family Court judge, is urging the Flint School District to change its attendance policies so that the parents of truant students wind up in court sooner.

Beagle's ongoing concern and efforts in this area deserve widespread support. Flint Superintendent Walter Milton Jr.'s positive response is also good news.

Beagle wants the district to let student absences accumulate rather than wiping the slate clean at the end of each school year. That way fewer patterns of truancy will go undetected. He also wants the district to act more quickly. Often, cases are not turned over to the court until after the school year ends.

He's absolutely right that truancy needs to be dealt with in a more timely manner. At present, district policy calls for sending letters home and scheduling parent conferences when students' absences begin to accumulate. Students who miss as few as 13 days can be referred to attendance court, but that doesn't always happen.

Beagle's latest efforts come as our community tries to make sense of the tragic death of Rose Kelley. The Flint 5-year-old was found dead in her vermin-infested east side home in June. Her mother, apparently fearing her children would be taken away, did not seek medical care for the sick girl before it was too late.

Warning signs were ignored and fingers have been pointing in a variety of directions, including at the school district. Rose's older half-sister had missed 50 days of kindergarten and 30 days of third grade. The youngster's attendance improved in the fourth grade, though, and she was on track educationally, so it's perhaps understandable that no action was taken.

However, in the absence of good parenting, officials must be ever ready to step in to safeguard the education and well-being of children. Beagle offers a way to improve that vigilance by addressing truancy more swiftly and the serious problems in the home to which it often points.

Working on working; Goodwill's program targets job-jumpers

By Sherri Begin

Crain's Detroit Business

6:00 am, June 29, 2006

Seven months into her job as an administrative assistant at **Presbyterian Villages of Michigan** in Detroit, Bridget Knox was ready to quit, just as she had so many times before.

Between 2000 and 2005, Knox left eight jobs at area employers, including **Ameritech Corp., Big Lots Inc., CVS Corp.** and **Exel Global Logistics Inc.** She left when she became bored, frustrated or tired of dealing with authority figures.

This time Knox, 43, took the day off from her job at the **Village of Brush Park Manor Paradise Valley** senior community. She pulled out information on coping she'd received from training at **Goodwill Industries of Greater Detroit** and called her "coach" at the agency.

The next day she went back to work. She celebrated her one-year anniversary at Presbyterian Villages in mid-June.

"I have the hardest boss I've ever had. If it was the old Bridget, I would have quit."

Goodwill last fall launched a pilot program to help 500 Detroit residents gain the skills and right attitude to get a job and keep it.

The early results of the program are so promising that foundations and state departments funding it believe it could become a state model for people who have cycled through the state's welfare- and job-training programs.

The program also has the potential to be a national model, said David Egner, president of the **Hudson-Webber Foundation**. "But what I'm excited about in the meantime is ... I think we're establishing a model here of how the state and nonprofits and foundations can work together on other issues as well."

Goodwill has secured first-year funding totaling \$1.5 million from Hudson-Webber, the **McGregor Fund, Ford Motor Co. Fund, CVS Corp.**, and the Michigan departments of Human Services, Labor and Economic Growth, and Corrections, and Detroit Workforce Development.

The private foundations committed additional money to partially fund the program for two more years. In the fourth year, the foundations are hoping the state will cover the entire cost of the program.

But Goodwill will have to get results. The funders have issued several challenges: 80

percent of the 500 people in the program must complete their customized training programs. Of those, 85 percent must gain employment. Of those who get jobs, 80 percent must keep them for 90 days, and 75 percent must keep jobs for one year.

“With most employment programs, the gauge has been 90 days, so this is a very aggressive goal,” said Goodwill Executive Director Delois Caldwell.

But the Goodwill program is up to the challenge, she said. “What we’ve found is when you can customize services individually, there are better outcomes.”

The program targets ex-offenders, young, minority males and other chronically unemployed people.

It begins with an assessment of each participant’s needs and is followed by a minimum of 12 weeks of training in soft skills, such as how to show up on time and get along with others; hard skills such as computer repair, computer literacy or janitorial services; and transitional employment either in Goodwill’s automotive parts assembly and packaging plant or through an unpaid internship with one of Goodwill’s business advisory council members.

The idea evolved from programs Goodwill began in 2000, partially with funding from Hudson-Webber.

The Detroit foundation over the past few years has funded similar programs at **Starfish Family Services, Visiting Nurses Association and Operation Able**. But the other nonprofits have since dropped their programs or began retooling them, said Lou Glazer, president and cofounder of **Michigan Future Inc.**, which is overseeing the chronic unemployment funding initiative for Hudson-Webber.

Goodwill was most successful in getting its program participants in stable employment by instilling in them a sense of wanting to work and being a successful worker, Glazer said. “When people have that, they end up figuring out answers to all types of barriers,” such as transportation and childcare.

Goodwill’s program is producing “dramatically better” results than what the state has been getting with its Work First program, said David Campbell, president of the McGregor Fund.

That’s because the state programs “simply don’t spend any time helping the participants develop a capacity to keep a job,” Glazer said.

But one of the challenges to getting the state to adopt the Goodwill program is that it costs about \$3,000 per person, compared with the state’s program, which runs \$1,000 per participant, he said.

That’s a reason the state may use the program to address only the people who have had the most difficulty getting into stable employment, said Don Mussen, director of family support services at the Department of Human Services.

“We believe the model Goodwill is using is one that may be able to successfully engage them and be able to provide the supports needed to get some success.”

The other state departments funding the program believe it can work with their clients, too, Mussen said. “We are hopeful to be able to fund it for the next coming year.”

The state has worked with the nonprofit sector in the past, but now the departments seem more willing to be flexible, by changing the ways they recruit people into the program, for example, Campbell said. “That increases the likelihood this is going to get lots more people to work and be a highly effective program.”

Some aspects of the Goodwill program, such as paying someone on the first day of training or making sure there’s a balance between classroom time and work experience, could be transferred to any job-training program, he said. The foundation plans within a few months to publish a report on the Goodwill model for getting the chronically unemployed into jobs and to distribute it to state and federal policy makers, Egner said.

In a 2004 study done by the **Corporation for a Skilled Workforce** in Ann Arbor, **Oakwood Health System and Fitzgerald Finishing Co.** in Detroit applauded the work ethic of Goodwill graduates they had hired and said they’d saved money by doing so. “The findings show that hiring our program’s graduates provides cost savings to employers by reducing turnover and providing high-quality entry-level employees that are a competitive advantage,” said Joseph Evans, director of Goodwill’s Detroit career center.

CVS, which is represented on Goodwill’s business advisory committee, employs some of the people from Goodwill’s program for weeklong internships.

Those people are better candidates for employment, because they have more customer-service savvy and more job-readiness, said Lena Barkley, government programs liaison for CVS.

Job Placements

	2002	2003	2004
Participants	78	112	80
Job placements	33	63	57
% in job, six months	71	73	86
% in job, one year	61	69	84

Agency chief ready for job creation challenge

Monday, July 03, 2006

By Myron Kukla

MUSKEGON CHRONICLE NEWS SERVICE

Bill Raymond sees helping companies and workers adapt to a changing job market among his biggest challenges as the new executive director of Michigan Works/Community Action Agency for Ottawa County.

Raymond, 56, doesn't have any "magic answers" to the static employment market West Michigan has been locked into for the past four years.

"It's going to take a combination of things to get us strong again, including creating a more diversified economy, attracting more high-tech businesses and having a skilled work force ready to take on new challenges," he said.

Ottawa County has been moving along slowly on the economic recovery path.

According to Kalamazoo-based W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, there were 116,400 jobs in the county in the first quarter of the year. While manufacturing jobs declined by 1.3 percent in 2005, the loss has been offset by a 1.5 percent increase in construction jobs this year.

"We've lost a lot of manufacturing jobs to out-of-state and out-of-country locations as companies move to be more competitive in a global market," Raymond said.

"Our area was very strong economically in the 1990s because of manufacturing, but I think we have to realize that manufacturing is not going to carry the whole economy anymore," he said.

"We need to attract and develop more technology-based companies and develop the skilled workers they need."

Raymond comes to the job heading up Michigan Works/Community Action Agency after a 30-year career in social service and faith-based leadership work.

He was the chief operating officer of Zeeland-based I.N. Network USA, an international Christian development organization, with missions in 36 countries.

A graduate of Western Michigan University with a master's degree in social work, Raymond was also executive director of Good Samaritan Ministries in Holland from 1991 to 1998 and was president of his own firm, FaithWorks Consulting Services, for six years.

He sees his past experience as a perfect fit in his new post trying to bring industry and workers together.

"My career has been in helping people to better their lives, and that is what the job is all about," Raymond said.

BAY CITY

DEF 7/2

Child-support objection could be dismissed

A state attorney says a lawsuit filed by a men's rights group on behalf of a man who is declining fatherhood is frivolous.

Assistant Attorney General Joel D. McGormley asked U.S. District Judge David M. Lawson to dismiss the lawsuit during a hearing Wednesday in Bay City.

Lawson said he would take the case under advisement.

The National Center for Men filed the lawsuit in March on behalf of Matt Dubay, 25, who was ordered to pay \$500 in monthly child support for a daughter he has with his ex-girlfriend.

Dubay has said that his ex, Lauren Wells, knew he didn't want to have a child.

Woman hit by car in domestic brawl

POLICE BLOTTER

FLINT TOWNSHIP

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Monday, July 03, 2006

By Elizabeth Shaw

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A domestic dispute turned ugly about 10 p.m. Sunday, resulting in a woman getting struck by a car in a parking lot.

Police said it appears the woman driver was chasing her ex-boyfriend and his new girlfriend in their vehicle when both cars stopped in a parking lot at Flushing Road and Ballenger Highway.

The man told police he smashed the woman's vehicle with a sledgehammer after she tried to run him over with her car.

The woman then struck his female companion with her car.

She was transported to the hospital but the extent of her injuries is unknown.

The case remains under investigation but arrests are likely, police said.

3 accused of preying on elderly to face trial

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Saturday, July 01, 2006

By Paul Janczewski

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FLINT - Three Flint men who allegedly embarked on a deadly crime spree to rob the elderly and leave no witnesses were ordered to stand trial.

Jerry O. Walker, 17, Demitray L. Hodge, 26, and Sherman M. Buggs, 23, face a total of 50 charges among them, including first-degree murder, felony murder, armed robbery, home invasion, conspiracy, carjacking, arson and weapons charges.

Buggs also faces additional charges of murder, assault and weapons charges for wounding an elderly man and killing another man in separate incidents.

Flint District Judge William H. Crawford II scheduled a July 17 arraignment for the trio before Genesee Circuit Judge Joseph J. Farah.

They are charged with killing Catherine Wedlow, 74, and her husband Green Wedlow, 75, who were found shot in the head at point-blank range Jan. 27 in their York Avenue residence.

Two days later and eight blocks away, Robert Vondrasek, 75, was found with a fractured skull, eight knives embedded in his back, a slashed throat and 14 other stab wounds in his burning E. Russell Avenue residence.

Buggs also was charged in the Jan. 29 slaying of Daymond D. Brown, 29, of Flint, in a 1 a.m. robbery attempt on Aubrey Street near Flint Park Boulevard and Bishop Avenue, and shooting Luther Hill, 76, on Jan. 26 when he answered a knock at his E. Ruth Avenue residence door.

One witness said he was with Buggs when he shot Brown. A Genesee County Jail inmate testified that Buggs told him about the shootings and targeting the elderly, and another man said he refused to join Buggs in the crime spree but testified about Buggs' intentions at the hearing.

Walker and Hodge both gave statements to police linking all three to the crimes.

State program helps low-income women

Friday, June 30, 2006

By Kathleen Longcore

The Grand Rapids Press

Next week, the state health department will begin offering family planning services to 200,000 low-income women ages 19 to 44 who previously were not covered.

In announcing the services Wednesday, Gov. Jennifer Granholm said the program, called Plan First!, could help reduce state health care costs.

A recent study showed 40 percent of pregnancies in Michigan are not planned. If the offered services reduced just 10 percent of unintended pregnancies, it would save the state \$27 million in Medicaid costs each year, Granholm said.

"It is estimated that each public dollar spent to provide family planning services saves \$3 that would otherwise be spent in Medicaid costs for pregnancy-related care and medical care for newborns," said Janet Olszewski, director of the Michigan Department of Community Health.

Michigan is the 19th state to offer family planning services to women who meet Medicaid eligibility requirements, Olszewski said. The program does not include coverage for abortions or treatment for infertility, she said.

Federal approval of a Medicaid waiver to cover the services paved the way for the program to start July 1. For more information or to enroll, call (800) 642-3195.

50 nonprofits to share grants worth \$686,224

HOMETOWN HEADLINES

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Saturday, July 01, 2006

By Ron Fonger

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The Community Foundation of Greater Flint has agreed to make \$686,224 in grants to more than 50 nonprofit organizations throughout the county.

Grants range from \$250 to \$110,000 and come from permanently endowed funds that were established by donors, the foundation said.

The largest grant is to the United Way of Genesee County and will support a project aimed at assessing and building the strength of nonprofit groups.

Established in 1988, the foundation awarded more than \$5.4 million dollars in grants to the community in 2005.

Column: Welfare carrots and stick -- not time limits **-- need politicians' attention**

Sunday, July 02, 2006

By Peter Luke at pluke@boothnewspapers.com.

The poor, generally speaking, vote in fewer numbers than the middle and upper classes. But they sure can get more than their fair share of attention when elections near. So it was this summer as lawmakers and the Granholm administration attempted to thrash out welfare rule changes that for the first time in Michigan would impose a lifetime time limit -- 48 months -- on eligibility for cash assistance.

The goal apparently was to have the new rules approved this summer when the fiscal 2007 budget is completed. In the end Friday, however, a budget agreement finalized quicker than anticipated booted talk of welfare reform off past the November election.

The change would have helped Republicans because they have been pushing for more than a year to limit the time a parent can receive a monthly check through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

Democrat Gov. Jennifer Granholm, who signaled six months ago that she accepted the concept of time limits with certain exceptions would have won, too. She could have claimed bipartisan success in welfare reform at time when GOP challenger Dick DeVos has included welfare time limits in his economic program.

Some Republicans believe that may have been the problem, that House Republicans, and perhaps the DeVos campaign, grew concerned that as a week of talks progressed, an agreement would have removed welfare as a campaign issue. Publicly, DeVos called on Granholm and lawmakers to reach an agreement on time limits.

The stick of time limits, however, has been the wrong place to focus.

There aren't huge numbers on the rolls indefinitely. There are only 10,000 or so cases right now that that exceed four years. Ohio has a three-year limit, but there are exceptions for those unable to work. Illinois' limit is five years but exempts those on a college degree track.

Many states, for example, exempt victims of domestic violence or the parents of a disabled or sick child. Some states will reduce a benefit for a parent who refuses to work but maintain assistance for children.

Any time limit has to include allowances for those physically unable to work, including those with learning disabilities, lacking literacy skills and other workplace handicaps. And it would accompany pilot programs already in place that intensify the effort by the state and local jobs agencies to move those who can work into work.

What the state doesn't really know is how many of those on cash assistance face credible barriers to work. Since the number has to be fewer than 10,000, is that really a big deal in a state with a population of more than 10 million?

Monthly cash assistance that hasn't been increased in a dozen years is but one component of welfare. Other components are food assistance and health care for which there are no time limits for eligible beneficiaries.

The primary issue with welfare in Michigan isn't the stick of time limits but the rather thin financial carrot of work incentive. It's the thinnest in the Midwest.

A Michigan parent on welfare can only earn a combined \$800 a month in cash assistance and employment pay before seeing benefits reduced. For every dollar of income earned beyond \$800, one dollar of assistance is subtracted. In Illinois and Indiana, states held up by Republicans as examples for Michigan to follow, the combined amount is more than \$1,100.

According to the Michigan League for Human Services, a family on welfare in 1996 could earn 74 percent of the federal poverty threshold in combined assistance and earned wages before a benefit reduction. A decade later, that income limit amounts to about 60 percent of poverty.

Raising that limit would cost the state more because more working parents at high wage levels would remain eligible for the maximum cash assistance benefit.

At the same time, however, a larger cash incentive by the state to welfare recipients to strive for higher wages, more work hours and greater monthly income might make the goal of long-term financial independence more realistic.

That would make the issue of time limits a moot point.

Contact Peter Luke at (517) 487-8888 or e-mail him at pluke@boothnewspapers.com.

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This Week APHSA in Washington

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HHS Releases TANF Interim Regulations

On June 29, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released an Interim Final Rule implementing the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) provisions of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA). There is a 60-day comment period for these regulations, although they are considered effective immediately. The rule provides additional time regarding the work verification system requirements by allowing states to submit a plan to HHS by October 1, 2006, but states will not be subject to a penalty for noncompliance until one year later. States are not given any allowances to make state law changes, but HHS has invited states that believe it will be impossible to meet the work participation rates without state legislative action to submit comments explaining their situation and the rationale for a reasonable cause exemption.

The regulations addressed the areas of work, new verification system plans, maintenance-of-effort changes, and new data reporting requirements. HHS chose to go beyond defining the types of activities that apply to each category of work and identified the actual activities that could count and, in some cases, the duration of that activity. The rule also identified what activities require compliance with the minimum wage provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act, including both subsidized and unsubsidized employment, community service, and work experience programs. It specifies that existing state practices that count job search, job readiness activities, and vocational education training as part of work experience will no longer be accepted. Also, states will no longer be able to include the following activities in the Job Search and Job Readiness category: activities essential to the health, safety, and welfare of families; activities associated with a child's dental checkups, immunization, and school attendance; parenting skills and participation in Head Start; remedial education and ESL; personal care during recovery from a medical problem; and activities that promote a healthier lifestyle. The regulations also specify that the "TANF program was not intended to be a college scholarship program for postsecondary education." HHS is now explicitly restricting states from

counting basic skills, language training, and postsecondary education leading to a baccalaureate or advanced degree within the category of vocational education; states must now limit vocational education to programs that prepare participants for a specific trade, occupation, or vocation. Also, states will no longer be allowed to include the following activities in the category of community services: participation in substance abuse treatment; mental health and family violence counseling; life skills classes or parenting classes; job readiness instruction; caring for a disabled household member; and several other activities. The regulations also clarified that work requirements would apply to parents of child-only cases when the parents have either been sanctioned off the caseload or have reached their lifetime time limit. However, this would not apply to a minor parent who is not a head-of-household, and an alien who is ineligible to receive assistance due to his or her immigration status. On a case-by-case basis, recipients of Supplemental Security Income benefits could also be excluded.

A major focus of the regulations is on new uniform national requirements for how states document that a recipient has actually worked the hours reported, as well as internal controls that states must have in place to verify that information. States will not be allowed to use the long-standing practice of "exception reporting," under which a service provider contacts the state when a recipient is not meeting the requirements, rather than regular reporting of a person meeting the requirements. The regulations also require that most of the allowable activities be supervised on a daily basis in addition to daily, weekly, or biweekly documentation. However, private-sector employers will only have to provide documentation every six months. States may accept pay stubs, timecards, sign-in/out sheets, and rosters with recorded work.

The rule goes into additional areas that APHSA will address in an in-depth summary and in conference calls over the next several weeks. The rule was published in the June 29 *Federal Register* (71 FR 37453-37483) and is available at <http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20061800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2006/06-5743.htm>.

Senate Passes Interstate Compact Bill

On June 23, the Senate passed the Safe and Timely Interstate Placement of Foster Children Act of 2006 (H.R. 5403) by voice vote on the unanimous consent calendar. On May 24, the House had passed the identical bill by voice vote under suspension of the rules. The bill would create new rules for the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC). In contrast to a similar bill passed by the House last year, H.R. 5403 contains neither a provision to eliminate the opt-out of background checks nor a requirement to exclude private adoptions from the revised ICPC. Some key provisions include a new Title IV-E state plan requirement to conduct, complete, and report the results of a home study within 60 days of a request; a potential 15-day extension (which expires in September 2008) to the time limit if it can be documented that circumstances beyond state control were involved; a \$1,500 incentive for home studies completed within 30 days; and a new requirement that ongoing visitation must occur every six months in interstate cases. The amendments in this legislation apply to payments made under Titles IV-B and IV-E beginning on October 1, 2006, and therefore compliance with all the bill's provisions could affect IV-B and IV-E funding. The text is available at <http://thomas.loc.gov>.

Ways and Means Committee Marks Up Child and Family Services Bill

On June 29, the House Committee on Ways and Means conducted a markup hearing on H.R. 5640, the Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006. The bill would reauthorize a number of federal programs, including the Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) program (Title IV-B, subpart 2), as well as the Court Improvement program and Mentoring Children of Prisoners program. The bill also targets the additional \$40 million in mandatory funds provided under the PSSF program to require

states to conduct monthly visits with foster children and sets a 10 percent cap on Child Welfare Services (Title IV-B, subpart 1) administrative spending. Committee Chairman Bill Thomas (R-Calif.), Ranking Member Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.), and Reps. Wally Herger (R-Calif.), Jim McDermott (D-Wash.), Dave Camp (R-Mich.) and Pete Stark (D-Calif.) each provided brief statements in support of the bill and commented on its bipartisan nature. Rep. Stephanie Tubbs Jones (D-Ohio) requested that specific language be added to the bill allowing the targeted funds to also be used for loan forgiveness for social workers. The committee agreed that the bill's general language would allow for this usage of funds and that this would be stated in report language. Thomas acknowledged that the additional \$40 million may not be sufficient but that if states were able to show progress, the committee should consider providing additional funds for child welfare. The bill can be accessed at <http://thomas.loc.gov/>.

House Holds Subcommittee Hearing on Meth Treatment Programs

On June 28, the House Government Reform Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy, and Human Resources held a public hearing on "The Availability and Effectiveness of Programs to Treat Victims of the Methamphetamine Epidemic." Chairman Mark Souder (R-Ind.) introduced a variety of experts and former addicts to testify to the nature of meth addictions, the effectiveness and availability of current treatment options, and program needs for the future. Areas of concern discussed included replacing state competitive grants with block grant programs; maintaining Medicaid coverage of treatment programs; and diversifying and expanding treatment programs available to women and families. Lack of treatment programs in rural areas was also highlighted as an area of concern. More information can be found at <http://reform.house.gov/CJDPHR/Hearings/EventSingle.aspx?EventID=46323>.

House Democrats Introduce Bill to Simplify Medicare Drug Program

On June 27, House Democrats announced plans to introduce legislation they said will simplify the Medicare prescription drug plan. According to House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), the proposal would make prescription drug plans more affordable and less confusing than the current program. The proposal requires that the drug benefit program be administered through the federal government, and that the government negotiate drug prices with pharmaceutical companies to bring down costs. The proposal would extend the enrollment deadline to December 31, 2006, and close the "doughnut hole" coverage gap. More details are available at <http://democraticleader.house.gov/press/articles.cfm?pressReleaseID=1651>.

White House Requests Food Stamp Offsets to Cover Veterans Administration Funding

On June 28, the Bush administration asked Congress to offset \$131.5 million in proposed additional FY 2006 spending for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) by rescissions from several human service programs. The request, which would help provide credit monitoring and fraud watch services for veterans and service members affected by the theft of a stolen VA laptop computer and external hard drive, proposes to use \$20 million in unobligated balances from the Food Stamp Program Employment and Training Program. The request also proposes rescissions from the Health Professional Student Loans program (\$6.7 million) and the Responsible Reintegration of Youthful Offenders program (\$49.1 million). The request is available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/amendments/supplemental_6_28_06.pdf.

NGA Letter Opposes Proposed Administrative Changes to Medicaid

On June 27, the National Governors Association (NGA) sent a letter to HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt urging him to reconsider implementing the administrative changes to Medicaid proposed in the administration's fiscal year 2007 budget. The changes include a reduction in allowable provider taxes, limits on payments to government providers, and changes to reimbursement policies for rehabilitation services as well as school-based administration and transportation. The letter states that the changes are

cost shifts that would impose a huge financial burden on the states. NGA asks the administration to join with the governors to develop reforms that would enhance the Medicaid program, while saving money for the federal government and the states. The letter can be found at http://www.aphsa.org/disabilities/publications/NGA_Letter_to_Leavitt_.pdf.

Lawsuit Filed Against Medicaid Citizenship Documentation Requirements

On June 28, a lawsuit was filed against the federal government over the new Medicaid citizenship documentation requirements included in the DRA. The lawsuit, filed by the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, the National Health Law Program, and a Chicago-based law firm, names HHS Secretary Michael Leavitt as the defendant and claims the new requirements violates the Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which protects against property deprivation without due process. The suit is being filed on behalf of nine Medicaid beneficiaries who say they are unable to provide the necessary documentation, and claims that the new requirements put current beneficiaries, already determined eligible for Medicaid, "through a complex, costly, and difficult administrative process to prove the same thing all over again." The plaintiffs fear that the new requirements may result in thousands or millions of beneficiaries losing Medicaid coverage. The lawsuit is available at http://www.aphsa.org/disabilities/publications/Bell_v_Leavitt_Complaint%20.pdf

Food Stamp Errors Improve Again; 14 States Receive Bonuses

On June 23, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) released FSP payment error rate results for FY 2005. The rate improved again for the seventh year in a row, dropping to 5.84 percent, compared with 5.88 percent for FY 2004. The payment error rate is derived by adding the error rates for overpayments and underpayments. FNS also announced \$30 million in bonus payments to 14 states for exemplary performance in four categories: lowest payment accuracy (Alabama, Kansas, Massachusetts, Montana, Nevada, North Carolina, North Dakota, South Dakota, Virgin Islands, and Washington); most improved payment accuracy (Alabama, Nevada, and Washington); lowest negative error rate (Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, and South Dakota); and most improved negative error rate (Delaware and Vermont). South Dakota had the lowest combined payment error rate of 1.19 percent, while Nebraska had the lowest negative error rate of 0.20 percent.

Nebraska Human Services Director Nominated to Replace Eric Bost at USDA Post

On June 15, the White House announced that President Bush intends to nominate Nancy Montanez-Johner to be undersecretary of agriculture for food, nutrition, and consumer services. Montanez-Johner currently serves as director of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). She would replace Eric Bost, who was nominated last April to be ambassador to South Africa and was confirmed by the Senate on June 29. Montanez-Johner earlier served as the Nebraska DHHS chief executive officer for the Western Service Area and worked in the Professional Partner Program at Region III Behavioral Health Services. She received her bachelor's degree from the University of Nebraska at Kearney. The White House announcement is available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/06/20060615-7.html>.

Report Assesses How Social Programs Fared Under Katrina

On June 27, the Urban Institute issued a report, *Federalism after Hurricane Katrina: How Can Social Programs Respond to a Major Disaster?* The report explores programs' responses to Hurricane Katrina, describes pre-disaster operations, specifies what made Katrina so hard to handle, and suggests better ways to respond to disasters in the future. The paper examines four key programs that help individuals and families meet basic needs and deal with crises: housing assistance provided through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and through the Federal Emergency Management Agency; income replacement through Unemployment Insurance and Disaster Unemployment Assistance; health care through Medicaid; and cash assistance through TANF. The Urban Institute notes that these are not the only important programs for low-income people, but do

represent essential national programs with responsibility shared among federal, state, and local governments. The report states that public programs had served many low-income hurricane victims in Louisiana and Mississippi before the hurricane even hit, but the impact of Katrina strained the essential components of these programs, including their funding arrangements and eligibility and benefit standards. The report poses questions about the programs' ability to respond promptly to families and individuals affected by the storm, and about state and local governments' incentives to respond effectively to victims' needs. The report is available at <http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?id=311344>.